

Why Christians Don't Study Their Bibles, Part 2 - Romans 3:5-8 – June 5th, 2011

- Today will be part two of a series titled; "Why Christians Don't Study Their Bibles." I can already sense guilt and condemnation as I say that.
- The reason for this title is really the same as the reason for this Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in that he must confront them using scripture.
- Paul does this, this way, because he needs to show them, in the mirror of God's Word, how that everything they saw as being true, was not.

- They saw themselves as righteous in their privileged circumcision and in so doing thought they were a true Jew, when in fact they were not.
- Paul has been dismantling this notion of how they falsely fancy themselves being guaranteed salvation vis-a-vis their circumcision, as Jews.
- He will use the toolbox of God's law to condemn them in this condition. Absent this, they're left to their own perception, which is a deception.

- I am keenly aware that you may be having considerable difficulty trying to connect the dots of Jewish law with why we don't study God's Word.
- Perhaps you will indulge me as I attempt to connect those dots, and fill in those blanks, by simply starting with this following statement:
- The truth of the matter is the main reason we don't open up and study our Bibles is because we don't want our Bibles to open up and study us.

1. It's uncomfortable for the comfortable (Verses 1-2)

- Because they can no longer be comfortable and secure in the circumcision as Jews outwardly, he rhetorically asks them why even be a Jew.
- He then answers it by saying there's much in every way, first and foremost that as Jews they had been entrusted with the very Word of God.
- Paul has succeeded in making them very uncomfortable in, that which they had become quite comfortable in, and he uses scripture to do it.

2. It's faithful for the faithless (Verses 3-4)

- Paul rhetorically asks another question, this time it's as it relates to those not having faith, or lacking faith, nullifying the faithfulness of God.
- He again answers the question saying; "not at all!" Then he tells them to let God be true and every man a liar and quotes David in Psalms.
- Here's why; just as God was still faithful when they were faithless, so too is God's Word faithful to study us and expose us in our faithlessness.

3. It's righteous for the unrighteous (Verses 5-6)

- (5) But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) (6) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?
- v5 Paul asks another question that if our unrighteousness, in exposing God's righteousness, means that God is unjust to bring His wrath on us.
 - v6 He answers this by telling them; "certainly not!" He then says that if this were so how could it be possible for God to judge the world?
 - In other words, if God uses mans unrighteousness for the purpose of revealing His righteousness, then punishing man for it seems unfair.

- Here's what I'm thinking; Paul is arguing from a human standpoint; to avoid judgment by God's Word, man will pass judgment on God's Word.
- In our unrighteousness in this fallen world, we seek to dismiss God's righteousness in His perfect Word, because we don't want to be judged.
- We then cling on to this false hope that somehow we're good, and for God's Word or God's people to convince me otherwise is judgmental.

William Newell - "What the apostle is attacking is the false hopes of men to evade that judgment. Christ has been judged and smitten in our stead. But, alas, how a man hates to come to the cross as one "to whom that stroke was due" (Isa. 53:8). But if you manage to escape conviction of sin, and thus miss personal faith in the Crucified One, you will go to hell forever."

4. It's sinless for the sinful (Verses 7-8)

- (7) Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" (8) Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

- v7 Paul says how someone might argue that if their falsehood enhances God's truth and increases his glory, why be condemned as a sinner.
- v8 He takes it further saying that they might as well say, as was being slanderously said about them, "let's just do evil, if it brings about good."
- It seems that Paul is asking and answering the same question in verses five and six in a different way here in verses seven and eight. Why?

- Well, like the Apostle Paul, it's extremely difficult to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who don't see themselves as sinners.
- The reason that people don't see themselves as sinners, is because they won't open up and study the mirror of God's Law within God's Word.
- It's so crucial to study the scriptures so the scriptures can study us, and show us, "us," in our sinful state. If not, I'm not interested in salvation.

- At this juncture, it's probably a good time to address something that has been the source of much debate and controversy within Christendom.
- I'm referring to this matter of wrongly believing that I can sin all I want because I'm saved by grace and God will always forgive me anyway.
- Be that as it may and suffice it to say, Paul answers this quite bluntly where at the end of verse eight he says, their condemnation is deserved.

- By way of application to us in our lives, this applies to, what I will delineate as, two groups of people, both of whom see themselves as good.
- The first group are those who profess to be Christians because they go to church, have a Bible, have been baptized, or they prayed a prayer.
- The second group may be Christians however, by the fruit of their carnal and worldly lives, you would never know it, and you can't confront it.

- The common denominator with both is that they live their lives with the presupposition that, though false, they're good enough to go to heaven.
- To the first group, the beloved Apostle would say; "you think you're a Christian and that you're saved, but you're not, thus you're condemned."
- To the second group he'd say; "you can't keep sinning thinking you're a Christian, as it may be that you weren't born again in the first place."

William Newell - "...if we, professing Christians, consign this whole passage to the Jew, we fall directly into the same terrible trap. Whole multitudes today in Christendom, sheltered in their imagination by the fact that they have "joined" some church, resent the very doctrines that Paul here insists on. Thousands of so-called "church-members" not only have never been brought under real conviction of sin and guilt and personal danger, but rise in anger like the Jews of Paul's day when one preaches their danger directly to them! Now if God paid no attention whatever to the claim of the Jew to be exempt from judgment because he was a Jew, neither will He pay any attention to the claim of the "Baptist" or "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian" or "Methodist,"—as such. For all men are alike guilty, common sinners! What avails before a holy God the special religious names sinners may call themselves? This book of Romans will do you and me no good if we apply it to Jews or Mormons only!"

- I see all this as the "why" behind the "what" of Biblical illiteracy in Christianity today. I won't study the Bible, because I don't want to hear this.
- A recent Barna study shows that "60%" of American's are unable to name either half (five) of the Ten Commandments or the Four Gospels."
- I'm too comfortable in my faithless self-righteousness, thus instead of the Bible keeping me from sin, my sin has in fact kept me from the Bible.
- It's for this reason, sound doctrine isn't tolerated. This brand of Christian will flock to a church that tells them what their ears are itching to hear.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 NIV In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: (2) Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (3) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (4) They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

- When choosing this title, it dawned on me that it could have been subtitled, "Why Pastor's Don't Teach the Bible, let alone preach the Bible.
- I'll close by agreeing and committing to being that Pastor who does teach the Bible, and you can commit to being that Christian who studies it.